

Department of Legislative Services
 Maryland General Assembly
 2026 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
 First Reader

House Bill 1354 (Delegate Hornberger, *et al.*)
 Environment and Transportation

State Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners - Veterinarians, Veterinary Technicians, and Veterinary Assistants

This bill requires the State Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners (SBVME) to establish (1) an expedited process for authorizing a veterinary assistant or veterinary technician who holds an authorization or a registration to perform veterinary care in another state or jurisdiction to perform or become registered to perform veterinary care in the State, provided that the state or jurisdiction in which the applicant is licensed, authorized or registered offers a similar reciprocal process to individuals licensed, authorized, or registered by the board; (2) a process to allow time spent as a veterinary technician to be credited toward meeting the professional education or training requirements for licensure as a veterinary practitioner; and (3) a process to allow time spent as a veterinary assistant to be credited toward meeting the qualifications for registration as a veterinary technician.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Special fund expenditures increase by \$370,000 in FY 2027 only. Special fund revenues are not anticipated to be materially affected, as discussed below.

(in dollars)	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029	FY 2030	FY 2031
Revenues	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
SF Expenditure	370,000	0	0	0	0
Net Effect	(\$370,000)	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

Note:() = decrease; GF = general funds; FF = federal funds; SF = special funds; - = indeterminate increase; (-) = indeterminate decrease

Local Effect: The bill does not materially affect local government finances or operations.

Small Business Effect: Minimal.

Analysis

Current Law: SBVME, which falls under the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA), licenses and registers veterinarians, registered veterinary technicians, veterinary hospitals, and animal control facilities and enforces the Maryland Veterinary Practice Act and related regulations. The board currently regulates more than 3,300 veterinarians, more than 950 registered veterinary technicians, more than 600 veterinary hospitals, and approximately 30 animal control facilities. Fees for licenses, registrations, and examinations are set in regulation.

State law prohibits a person from practicing veterinary medicine unless the person is licensed, registered, and authorized to engage in the practice under provisions of State law that regulate the practice of veterinary medicine. “Veterinary practitioner” means a licensed and registered veterinarian engaged in the practice of veterinary medicine. SBVME must issue a license to, and annually register, any person who passes a specified examination, is of good moral character, and has a diploma from an approved college or institution conferring upon them the degree of Doctor of Veterinary Medicine.

Chapters 588 and 589 of 2023 required SBVME to establish an expedited process to authorize a veterinary practitioner who holds a current, valid license to practice veterinary medicine in another state or jurisdiction to become licensed to practice veterinary medicine in the State.

“Veterinary technician” means a person who is registered with SBVME as a veterinary technician; the term includes a veterinary nurse. A veterinary technician may, but is not required to, register with SBMVE. SBMVE must register any applicant who (1) meets the board’s educational requirements; (2) passes a board-approved examination; (3) is of good moral character; (4) is at least age 18; and (5) otherwise meets the statutory requirements related to registered veterinary technicians.

Under current regulations, the board may register an applying veterinary technician from another state or foreign jurisdiction who submits proof of meeting the following requirements: (1) is registered in another state or a foreign jurisdiction and is a graduate of a school accredited by the American Veterinary Medical Association; (2) has been employed in a clinical practice as a veterinary technician continuously for the five years preceding application; (3) has paid all appropriate fees; and (4) has passed the Maryland State Veterinary Technician Examination. An applicant also must submit proof of good moral character to the board.

“Veterinary assistant” means a person who (1) aids a veterinarian or veterinary technician in in patient care and (2) is not registered with the board as a veterinary technician. A veterinary assistant may perform specified tasks under either the direct supervision of a

veterinary practitioner or veterinary technician under the direct supervision of a veterinary practitioner or under the immediate supervision of a veterinary practitioner or veterinary technician, as specified.

Veterinary assistants are not credentialed in the State and have a limited scope of practice.

State Fiscal Effect: SBVME advises that it already has processes in place to allow (1) veterinary technicians and veterinary assistants who are authorized to perform veterinary care out-of-state to become registered veterinary technicians in Maryland and (2) time spent as a veterinary assistant to be credited toward meeting the qualifications for registration as a veterinary technician in the State. As a result, those provisions are not anticipated to materially affect SBVME finances.

However, SBVME does not currently have a process in place to allow time spent as a veterinary technician to be credited toward meeting the professional education or training requirements for licensure as a veterinary practitioner. As a result, special fund (State Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners Fund) expenditures increase for SBVME to establish such a process.

MDA estimates that special fund expenditures for SBVME increase by \$450,136 in fiscal 2027, with costs ranging from \$85,067 in fiscal 2028 to \$146,909 in fiscal 2029. MDA's estimate includes costs to hire:

- one full-time investigator to handle an anticipated increase in the number of complaints the board will receive as veterinary technicians with significantly less education become veterinary practitioners under the process established by the bill; and
- a consultant, in fiscal 2027 only, to (1) perform feasibility studies to determine what work training, if any, might be adequate to substitute for the current education and training requirements for veterinary practitioners and (2) develop a new license application and examination for the veterinary technician to veterinary practitioner pathway (to ensure that veterinary technicians that seek to become veterinary practitioners under the process are competent and ready to practice veterinary medicine in the State).

While the Department of Legislative Services concurs that MDA needs to hire a consultant for the purposes described above, it is less clear that SBVME needs to hire a full-time investigator. SBVME itself advises that it does not anticipate that many veterinary technicians will seek licensure under this pathway or be able to successfully pass the examination without the professional education and training necessary to become a veterinary practitioner. As a result, it is unclear at this time how many additional complaints may result from the bill. Thus, the need for an investigator is unjustified at this

time. To the extent the bill results in a material increase in complaints, the board may request additional resources through the annual budget process.

Accordingly, special fund expenditures for SBVME increase by \$370,000 in fiscal 2027 only to hire a consultant to perform the feasibility studies and develop a license application and examination for the veterinary technician to veterinary practitioner pathway. This estimate includes \$350,000 to conduct the feasibility studies and \$20,000 to develop the license application and examination. Because MDA advises that the examination must be certified every five years, special fund expenditures also increase by approximately \$50,000 every fifth year thereafter, although any such costs fall outside the period covered by this fiscal and policy note.

As noted above, SBVME does not anticipate that many veterinary technicians seek to become veterinary practitioners as a result of the process established by the bill. Accordingly, special fund revenues from associated fees are not anticipated to be materially affected.

Additional Information

Recent Prior Introductions: Similar legislation has not been introduced within the last three years.

Designated Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Maryland Department of Agriculture; Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Charles, and Howard counties; Maryland Association of County Health Officers; Department of Legislative Services

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